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SUBJECT: VETERAN POLITICAL OPERATIVE TAKES CHARGE OF DRC
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

REF: 06 KINSHASA 1939

¶1. (SBU) Summary. New DRC National Assembly President Vital Kamerhe made a public call for good governance on assuming office January 8 in a ceremony with the six other members of the Assembly's executive committee. He promised to hold members of the new government and Assembly alike to high standards and would use constitutional powers to sanction them if necessary. All of the Assembly's executive officials are drawn from the majority AMP coalition. End summary.

¶2. (U) DRC National Assembly President Vital Kamerhe officially took office together with the six other members of the Assembly's executive committee in a ceremony January 8 at Kinshasa's Palais du Peuple. President Kabila, who had been scheduled to attend, was an unexplained last-minute no-show. The session was attended by members of the Assembly and dignitaries including the Ambassador and other members of the diplomatic corps, and featured remarks by Kamerhe and Congo-Brazzaville National Assembly President Jean-Pierre Thyser Tchikaya.

¶3. (U) Kamerhe, a veteran political operative who heads Kabila's PPRD party, received a boisterous welcome from supporters in the gallery. He devoted a good deal of his detailed speech to call for a change in governance practices of the past. He promised to fight corruption, impunity and other "anti-values," and emphasized that the Assembly would not hesitate to use its constitutional powers to sanction members of the government or of the Assembly itself.

¶4. (SBU) Kamerhe appealed for an end to insecurity in his native eastern DRC and reestablishment of the authority of the Congolese state throughout the country. He stressed that the new government and Assembly must work to fight poverty. He promised to work toward establishing a permanent home for the parliament including offices, staff and equipment for members.

¶5. (SBU) The ceremony had been postponed several days, reportedly to accommodate Kabila's schedule, and a chair set aside for him was not removed until the eleventh hour. A Kabila adviser told us Kabila had been advised by his lawyers not to attend on grounds of separation of powers.

¶6. (SBU) The executive committee taking office with Kamerhe was drawn exclusively from the AMP electoral coalition (reftel). No single party received more than one position. All officers were elected in first-round voting except the chief administrative and financial officer ("Questeur"), whose election was marked by the surprise withdrawal of

second-placed Vicky Katumwa. Kinshasa Deputy Wivine Moleka (PPRD) said January 10 that she had arrived for the December 29 second-round balloting prepared to vote for Katumwa, but was told that she had withdrawn in favor of first-placed and eventual winner Modeste Bahati.

¶7. (SBU) The full slate of National Assembly officers:

President: Vital Kamerhe, PPRD (South Kivu)
First vice president: Christophe Lutundula Apala pen'Apala, MSR (Eastern Kasai)
Second vice president: Marc Mywama Anedu, PALU (Bandundu)
Rapporteur (spokesman): Gregoire Katende wa Ndaya Muledi, FR (Eastern Kasai)
Assistant rapporteur: Egide Michel Ngokoso Apa, UDEMO (Kinshasa)
Questeur (administrative and financial officer): Modeste Bahati Lukwebo, Independent (South Kivu)
Assistant questeur: Brigitte Kalaba Sankwe, CODECO (Katanga)

¶8. (SBU) Comment. The DRC has no tradition of an independent legislature. Whether a partisan Kabila loyalist like Kamerhe is the leader who can steer it to a forceful independence remains to be seen. End comment.
MEECE